

Fear Me Out Podcast

Episode 24

Hosted by Clinical Psychologist - Dana P. Saperstein PhD.

Guest Speaker

Kerry Murray - Being of Service

Kim Fauskee 00:00

life's most persistent and urgent question is, what are we doing for others? On this episode, we speak with Kerry Murray, who gave up a lucrative and successful career as an executive with a major big pharma company to join and lead a global humanitarian organization that provides temporary shelter, and other essential personal needs to those affected by natural disasters, civil unrest and war. Carrie describes how becoming humanitarian was seated early in her life, and to what degree intuition, grit, determination and resilience has played a role in her success not only professionally, but personally, we hope you enjoy this conversation.

Dr. Dana 00:50

There are two basic motivating forces fear and love. When we're afraid, we pull back from life. When we're in love, we open up to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance.

Fear Me Out 01:09

Coming to you from our studio in Santa Barbara, California. This is the fear me out podcast. We're not your typical Self Help Program. Our show takes a deep dive into those psychological issues that affect us on a daily basis. We hope to shift your perspective and have you experiencing emotions differently. Now here are your hosts, Kim Fauskee. And Dr. Dana Saperstein.

Kim Fauskee 01:29

Jerry, thanks for being here today. Thank you so much for having me. And I know we're going to talk more about you and less about what you're going to do. But I think it's important that we at least start by talking about what you do, because you just came back from Poland, and the whole Russia Ukraine crisis. And so I'm gonna let you kind of describe what you do and what it was like being in Poland in the forefront of a war.

Kerry Murray 01:57

Well, thank you so much for having me. And yes, I just returned from the Ukraine Poland border, and I serve as president of Shelterbox. And we are a global humanitarian relief organization that is basically preparing every day for the worst day ever. And we go into disaster and conflict zones, when there's been a massive displacement. And I think we all know that in the Ukraine crisis right now. There's a massive amount of displacement. And that's people who've been forced to flee internally within

Ukraine. And then millions of people now over 5 million people who fled to neighboring countries. So what we do at Shelterbox is we provide for one of your basic needs that everyone has as a human, and it's for shelter, and we bring emergency shelter, and essential household items that help sustain your life when you've been forced to flee in an instant. And that's exactly what we've seen. So I deployed with our response team to Poland, originally to Krakow. And then I was working down on the on the Ukraine border in an area called premis shell. And it is,

Kim Fauskee 03:07

which is the train station of where the Ukraine people come in. Exactly,

Kerry Murray 03:12

exactly. So it's the first stop. So it's right on the border and is over the border on the Polish side. And it's where 10s of 1000s of people are arriving every single day. So I was part of the first team that went out to do initial assessments to really look at, okay, how many people where are they fleeing? What are the needs? Where are they staying? So we could begin to mount what will now be a very long term response in the region. And we currently have staff that are in Ukraine in western Ukraine. We have some response team members that are stationed in Moldova, one of the neighboring countries that's receiving huge influx of refugees. And then we have people in Poland as well. So we're really looking at this as not just an emergency response, but like a long term protracted response that will continue to grow and scale needs will change. And so we're doing some really important work in the region right now, but three different projects to bring emergency shelter and then basic items that people need to sustain their life.

Kim Fauskee 04:22

This is an operational question. But I was thinking about, as you were saying, if it's a protracted war, that goes on for a longer period of time, do you have the resources to be able to continue to help?

Kerry Murray 04:36

So that's always the challenge. And Shelterbox is a nonprofit charitable organization that relies on private charitable support to do our work. And there are many organizations in addition to Shelterbox that are working on this one, but for an organization like ours that does disaster relief, I always say, you know if it bleeds, it leads, and it's on the worst day ever that people come together and care about people in crisis. And it's usually when something is dominating the headlines. And right now we know, the Ukraine crisis is dominating the headlines every day. But that usually shifts and changes. And when the headlines fade, the private charitable support really does dry up. And so right now you've seen this avalanche of goodwill from across the world of people who are seeing, you know, people on their worst day ever, right? And they want to help. And so sometimes, you know, I would say it's in the worst of times, you sometimes see the best of humanity. And you're seeing that right now, my fear is what's going to happen three months from now or six months from now, when organizations including Shelterbox, are trying to mobilize shelter could be blankets, kitchen sets, solar lights, and when the headlines fade, people think that the story goes away, and everything's better, but it's not. And we've seen this in so many long, protracted conflict situations. Syria is a great example. We've been working there for 11 years. And so that's something I think about all the time, Kim, I'm really worried about this one.

Kim Fauskee 06:11

So how does it work politically for Basa get involved in a country you just mentioned Syria, which is technically an enemy to the United States, and you have people there helping the Syrian people, I should actually qualify it by saying the Syrian Government is an enemy to the United States, not the Syrian people. But mean, Ukraine didn't call you up and say, Come help us. So how do you get mobilized in that way to go help on a humanitarian mission? Yep. So

Kerry Murray 06:43

we usually organize or we always organize with other humanitarian actors, we never go it alone. And as part of the shelter cluster, and we formalize our work under the United Nations, and there's a series of it's a cluster system, but it's basically organized based on your basic needs. And so there's food security, there's wash and hygiene and sanitation, there's logistics, their shelter, shelter box feeds into the shelter, cluster, and camp management, as well as logistics clusters. And so we are all mobilizing and really organizing together. And so when we went to Krakow initially, it was to start to organize with other organizations that work under this UN cluster system.

Dr. Dana 07:33

To always go in person, do you always personally go in as a person, go yourself?

Kerry Murray 07:39

Not always. So we have teams all over the world that go in at different stages. But yes, I will deploy but we have really some of the most highly trained shelter experts and just humanitarians that are trained in emergency response for our organization, that we really organize our volunteers and our staff really based on the unique needs of that of the disaster. So for instance, in this emergency, our first team that we deployed to Poland to begin to coordinate our response, were shelter experts, professionals who are really safety security experts. Also people who understand procurement supply chain, how to move materials. And we build the teams really based on the unique needs of that specific response. And then we continually deploy teams, we deploy in teams, so multiple people that comprise the team for a period of weeks now overlap, and then we'll send in, you know, from tier one to tier two to tier three, as this continues, but I do respond, and we'll go in some disaster zones. And I've done that throughout my career and disaster relief. So I think it is really important, particularly when I'm really trying to help paint the picture of what's going on on the ground, what we're hearing from the people that we serve, what the needs are, just to provide a real pulse on what the situation is from a humanitarian perspective. But you asked about Syria, and as a humanitarian organization, we are political, we're non religious. We work all over the world in some of the world's most extreme conflict zones. And really, we tried to help the most vulnerable people on the planet. We can't respond to every disaster. But we do look at things like the human development index, and we look at where that country is on the index and we look to avoid duplication. So we look at what we bring. It is really special and unique that we can help these families who've been displaced, maybe no other organization who focuses on shelter is going into that response. We see that often. And so we do try to prioritize the most vulnerable locations. We also prioritize the most vulnerable people If that happens to be women, children, disabled, elderly. And that's what I saw on the border of Ukraine was that the people who were fleeing the country and making it into Poland were largely women, kids, elderly, disabled, some dogs and cats, almost very, very few

men. And that's because men between the ages of 18 and 60, are forced to stay behind a fight. And so we do work to we have to prioritize our work, we're not able to respond to every disaster. But we do really work hard to prioritize the most vulnerable and working in some of the hardest to reach places of the world.

Dr. Dana 10:43

And so as a compassionate person, how do you handle the emotional part of what it is? I mean, that must have been incredibly scary and sad and overwhelmed, overwhelming to go to Poland, to see what was happening, how do you as a person to handle the whole of that

Kerry Murray 11:01

it's also incredibly energizing as well. when you see people who are confronting some of the worst times of their life and their lives, and you definitely see this in this situation, we're there to bring hope, right. And we're there to empower people with the tools that they need to rebuild their lives. And I think that's why I love Shelterbox, so much is that shelter is the first step in the recovery process. once you get a roof over your head, everything else can follow. Children can get back to school, you can get back to work and your livelihood. But until you have that your world stops, although I will tell you, it was very difficult working in this situation, just seeing the size and the sheer scale of this. And you would think that with these refugees who are making it into the neighboring countries, you would think they would have a feeling of relief, but they absolutely don't. What I really experienced is an absolute fear. Their families have been ripped apart, they've left behind children, often, if you have I met many people who had an 18 19 20 year old child, son who can't leave. So they've left their husbands behind, they've left their jobs behind, they don't know if their home is going to be there. So they're an absolute fear. And they arrive to the border with a coat on their back, maybe a small bag, and it's taken them days and days and days by foot, by bus, by train just to get to that place. And then it's like, what's next? Where am I going to sleep tonight? You know, they don't speak the language, they might have very few resources they brought with them. So I think for me, it's really we are there to mobilize resources, and to understand the unique needs of the situation and give people the tools so that we can enable them to have some self recovery in these situations.

Dr. Dana 12:56

And and you were there for a couple of weeks or Yeah. And do you feel like what you're doing is making a difference? Can you see the difference?

Kerry Murray 13:09

I know what we do makes a difference. It's very there's a definite tangibility into the work that we do. And our teams have been working in Ukraine. And we have many distribution partners that we work with across the region. But some of the first aid that we had, that actually got unloaded, was in Ukraine. And I would say those are the most vulnerable people in this situation. You have over 7 million people who have been forced to flee from eastern and northern Ukraine to Western Ukraine. They are sleeping in schools, train stations, subway stations, they're sleeping in evacuation and collective centers. So some of the first aid that we had distributed was just something to give people a bit of comfort and as their mattresses, 1000s of mattresses to go in collective centers, so people can have a better rest. Also things like thermal blankets, you know, when we first deployed, it's the middle of winter, it's freezing

cold. So things like blankets, solar lanterns, when people have lost power, hygiene kits, so you can just have a bit of personal care and take care of your hygiene needs. So very basic things. We're also currently distributing shelter kits, which are tarpaulins, tools, and fixings that help you repair your home that's been damaged by the bombings so you can shelter in place. That's critically important as well as just having the basic framings to help shore up your home so that you can temporarily shelter there

Kim Fauskee 14:43

is that most of your embedded people in the Ukraine are doing now.

Kerry Murray 14:47

So we have two partners in Ukraine that are humanitarian partners that we work in one that we've worked with extensively in Syria. They're risking their lives to distribute the aid. We have two staff members that are currently in western Ukraine as well. And then we have some response team volunteers that are currently working in Moldova. We decided on Moldova initially, because it is the poorest country in Europe. It's not a member of NATO, there is a no fly zone, there are many people that are fleeing Odessa, going into Moldova that are in an extraordinary need. It's and what we know is that just as a percentage of the population, it's taken in a huge amount of refugees. So it's between now and 15. And 20% of the people in Moldova are refugees who fled to the country, and the resources of the government are quickly becoming overwhelmed. So the evacuation centers are full. And people just need the basic things for survival. So we've decided to really earmark some of our initial response efforts in the neighboring countries there specifically. And then we're looking at some other areas as well outside of Ukraine.

Kim Fauskee 16:02

So procurement and logistics must be a major part of what you do. And I'm assuming that not everything comes from your office here in Santa Barbara, that you must have distribution sites all over the world.

Kerry Murray 16:16

Yes. Shelterbox is a model of pre positioning. And so we pre positioned humanitarian aid items all over the world, really, and what's most appropriate for that region that we're likely to draw down upon in a natural disaster or conflict situation. And so our aid that were initially sent into Ukraine, the shelter kits, 1000s of them are coming out of our warehouse in Belgium. We also procured 1000s of coats, also blankets that we had pre-positioned in Europe as well. So we preposition everywhere from the Philippines where we have a massive natural disaster response going on right now. Coming out of super typhoon, right, which displaced hundreds of 1000s of people in December, you'd ever heard about it, because I only

Kim Fauskee 17:06

did because I had a friend that was there. That was there during the typhoon. Yeah,

Kerry Murray 17:10

so that's been a massive response. So we primarily do shelter kits. And then at other NFIP, there, we do things like mosquito nets, water purification units, solar lanterns. So we preposition aid in a

warehouse in Philippines that we draw down on there, we also have aid in the international humanitarian city in Dubai, and then other strategic hubs all around the world, places like Panama, that we can quickly draw aid down from and just and actually dropship it to where it needs to go. And then oftentimes, like even in this situation in Ukraine, we have to procure items based on the assessments that we're doing and meeting the unique needs of this situation at this moment right now. And those needs are likely to change. So as we move Season to Season becomes more of a protracted response.

Kim Fauskee 17:57

So you have agreements with the drop shippers or the the airlines or the military to get supplies where you need to

Kerry Murray 18:07

a lot of times you're building those agreements and partnerships in the middle of a conflict zone war zone, or in the middle of a disaster. It's all fluid. Hmm, yep, it's very fluid, and you're even building partners. So one of our partners, it's called people in need in Ukraine, is a new partner, that ship that we develop through this conflict.

Kim Fauskee 18:28

So that was an interesting setup to how you got involved in doing this. And we were talking earlier that it's probably pretty rare for a female CEO of a HumanIK Global Humanitarian novel, or even a Global Fortune 500 business. So how did you get involved in in nonprofit work and become the CEO of a worldwide company?

Kerry Murray 18:56

Well, I think I'll have to take us back to college. I went to school in Rhode Island, and I was a political science major. And I also was a lobbyist at the time for an environmental organization called Save the bank. And I loved humanitarian relief work, and I loved being a lobbyists. But unfortunately, when I graduated from college, I needed to pay off a huge amount of student debt. And so I had loans that I think probably took me 17 years to pay

Kim Fauskee 19:30

off, I was gonna say the nonprofit world probably isn't profitable, the best student loans.

Kerry Murray 19:34

So I ended up spending 13 plus years at a global pharmaceutical organization called GlaxoSmithKline. And I just really grounded out and I was I started off in sales, went into management training, and eventually into brand management and marketing working both in the US as well as in Europe. And I love that Oregon Session I think I developed really sound business skills. And it was an incredible, incredible organization to work with. And we did a lot to give back. And I think one of the things that drove me to wanting to really get back to my love of humanitarian work was when I had my daughter back in in 2004, I wanted to labor on Superbowl Sunday. And she was born on Groundhog Day, the next day on that Monday. And when I gave birth to my daughter, everything went wrong in an instant. And she was what they call a Million Dollar Baby. So I didn't meet her initially, because I had an emergency C section, but she had an umbilical cord that was strangling her neck wrapped three times

around her neck that she hadn't grown for 10 weeks. And so she was supposed to be this eight or nine Tom baby and she barely fit in the palm of my hand,

Kim Fauskee 21:00

and nothing you didn't know about that the doctors didn't know about that beforehand.

Kerry Murray 21:06

And I worked. I worked for huge medical Oh, a huge medical organization, and I didn't feel well my whole pregnancy she never moved. And I go to the doctor and they just say you're just a nervous first time mom, you're fine. But I had this instinct that I never felt well, during my pregnancy. And then sure enough, your intuition, right. Yeah, she really struggled. And so initially, they said she's not going to survive. And that was like the first week. And then it was, she was in the NICU, the neonatal intensive care unit in Philadelphia. And they said, we think that if she lives, she'll just never talk because she has paralyzed vocal cords. The vocal cords made no movement from the Yes. And so I was really touched. And I didn't know if she was going to survive the first year. So she had no sound when I took her home from the hospital, she had movement in just one court. And she really never left the house very much the first year because they were so worried about her getting sick. But at six months of age, she made her first sound. And we realized after some time that Okay, she's going to survive. And not only has she survived, she's thrived. And it's really because she had access to something that we take for granted. And it's medical care, right. And in so many places, especially where I work today, being pregnant could be a death sentence. And I wouldn't have survived and she wouldn't have survived, you know, if we were in South Sudan, right. And so we had access to emergency obstetric care. So I started to get really curious about humanitarian work again. And in 2009, the CEO of GlaxoSmithKline, decided to take a handful of executives from across the world. And I was one of them. And they put us in on basically, basically sabbatical assignments. And they sent me out for six months to an organization here in Santa Barbara called Direct Relief. And at the time, Direct Relief was decades old.

Kim Fauskee 23:12

I was gonna say, Tom Thomas is a good mentor.

Kerry Murray 23:15

Yeah. And so. So the organization was really struggling in that their expenses exceeded their revenue, and they really run at the time like a business, right? And they were really struggling to stay afloat, should they merge? What are they going to keep the lights on? The board members were getting their checks out to fix the leaky roofs. So they said, Can you help to build a really sustainable path to growth for our organization, and I came in at the end of December of 2009, for what I thought was a six month assignment. And in January of 2010, there was a massive earthquake in Haiti. And it displaced a million and a half people in an instant, it killed a few 100,000. And Direct Relief had been doing extraordinary work in Haiti for four decades. And the organization knew that it was going to be doing great work. And in terms of helping with some of the medical relief needs, crush wounds, what have you. And so I realized in this moment, during my six months, and hitting a huge disaster a month on the job was that I could leverage everything I had learned in my corporate life, and I could apply it to this nonprofit. And one, we were raising a lot of awareness, we're raising lots of resources. And the organization was growing. And I spent some time I went to Haiti, and it was the first time I'd ever experienced the work of

Shelterbox because there were a million and a half people displaced and there were shelter boxes everywhere. And so I just had this moment during those six months that, you know, this was extraordinary work. And I realized, like, wow, this is something that really tugs at my heart and something that I think I want to do And for the rest of my life? And do I really want to climb the corporate ladder? Do I want to be the CEO of Glaxo, which I always thought, you know, was in the cards? And do I want to keep getting promoted? And keep on that path? And I said, I said, No, you know, the board had asked me, will you stay and give us a couple of years of your life at Direct Relief? And I said, Yes, I want to do this. And so my daughter and I, and she was five years old at the time, I was a single mom. And I moved her here to Santa Barbara. And then I spent five and a half years, really helping the team to transform that organization. And I think you've seen, there are like, the strongest this organization's ever been. And I worked with an extraordinary team there. And I just really love the work. And so it was in 2015, on a return trip to the Philippines where I had been working, that I once again saw Shelterbox and I got the call from them. And they said, Will you serve as our president? " And I said, yes, if we can build it in Santa Barbara. So. So it was that at the end of 2015, I joined as the president of Shelterbox. And now I would say we're an organization that's 22 years old, it took us 15 years to reach the first million people sheltered, and it took us five years to reach the second million. And so we are definitely on a path to have a greater scale and impact. And, you know, the reason that it's so important and shelter for me is so important is that it is one of the biggest issues that's plaguing our world today is that there are more people displaced today than any time in recorded history. It's over 114 million not encountered not counting all the people who've been displaced by the recent crisis in Ukraine. So it's,

Kim Fauskee 26:57

that's a staggering number.

Kerry Murray 26:58

It's massive, its massive. And with climate change, it's only getting worse, you know this. And so something so simple, it's something we take for granted. But it's so essential. And I think you gentlemen will probably agree the past couple of years during COVID At no time as you're been home, but as important as during this global pandemic. So millions of people 10s of millions and over 100 million don't have access to a place to call home.

Dr. Dana 27:27

So Carrie, I'm absolutely fascinated by how things have worked for you. I'm curious about your childhood. That's where I always go to people's beginnings. I'm wondering how you were raised and what your life was like as a kid? Because I really do believe that, as adults, we sort of either become very self focused, or have the potential to be humanitarian, based on the way that we're raised. Just kind of curious about how you would describe your childhood.

Kim Fauskee 27:57

Yeah, I was impressed that you were going to be the CEO of a big pharma company. Yeah. I'm still stuck there. Yeah.

Kerry Murray 28:05

It's a great organization. I grew up in Connecticut, and a little Christmas tree farm.

Dr. Dana 28:13

A real Christmas tree. Yes. Interesting.

Kim Fauskee 28:15

Maybe that's the key

Kerry Murray 28:17

Christmas tree farm. My family is, I would say, very working class. And my family worked every day of the week. And so the trees were like more of the weekend, side hustle. The weekdays, my family had a small little shop in the town. And it was a little home store that I started working out when I was eight selling quilting fabrics and thread and blinds and shades for your home. And it was a very local small business. And then on the weekends on Sundays, my dad had another hustle, which was a flea market. And I also started about seven or eight years old working for one of the vendors at the flea market. And I would say my dad was definitely always very humanitarian in his spirit. And when I'd be working at the store, and he'd leave me at the store, managing it from the time I was eight years old and second grade, there would be people that would stop by the store and unbeknownst to me, and they would come in and say okay, well does your you know, does your dad have the CANS lucky would collect the cans for his dialysis treatments. And then I would have you know, a rocky that would come in and try and pick up \$5 That they would borrow on Monday and return on Friday. And so I realized that my dad was like, had this group, this community that he was helping in our town from all walks of life. And it created a really interesting I think experience for me growing up and that I had. I saw my parents who seemingly didn't really have a lot, but they were always willing to help others. With whatever they had to give, right, and lots of different ways. And so I think it's just like experiencing that, you know, people helping people. And that's what makes a community. Right. And I think that's what I've loved most even about this community here in Santa Barbara, is that we have an incredibly caring community of people that really care a lot about each other.

Dr. Dana 30:23

Siblings?

Kerry Murray 30:24

I do I have two siblings. I'm the baby. What else can I tell you? Growing up, I was a softball player. I was also a baseball player. So I played on the girls team, and I played on the boys team. And my dream was to be the first girl on the Red Sox. And so that's a good dream. I wanted to play baseball. It didn't work out.

Kim Fauskee 30:50

Your siblings have the humanitarian gene in them as well. Well,

Kerry Murray 30:57

My brother is a personal injury lawyer. My sisters are in medical sales, but they're great, great, great people. Yeah, but they don't they don't work in the humanitarian space. But they definitely are big supporters of Shelterbox.

Dr. Dana 31:11

Are your parents still live? Yes. They must be incredibly proud of you.

Kerry Murray 31:16

I don't know. I hope so.

Dr. Dana 31:18

They don't tell you. I want to talk to your parents I need to get

Kim Fauskee 31:24

I was the baby the family got all the attention? I'm the baby. I got all the attention. It was just wrong attention. Yeah.

Dr. Dana 31:32

It's just what you're doing is so phenomenal. And the story of your daughter leading you on a tour. This path is really remarkable. Yeah,

Kerry Murray 31:39

I mean, it definitely was the catalyst for my daughter. And it caused me to have a big shift in my life about what I wanted to do with my life. And I felt like I always had this drive to serve. But I didn't really have any experience. You know, I had my lobbying job in college. And then I also was an ESL teacher, as part of my work study job. But when I went and had initially had a Peace Corps interview, in college, they really wanted people with skills. And they said, you know, we want people who are nurses and doctors and an educator, so come back to us once you have some skills. So I always thought it would be something once I, you know, retired one day that I'd be able to do and contribute in my life, but I always really had this hunger for what ways can I contribute? You know, and I'm a big believer that everyone has something to contribute. So you just kind of have to find and lean into something, and find ways that you can be helpful.

Dr. Dana 32:39

And how's your daughter know, is she okay?

Kerry Murray 32:42

Believe it or not, my daughter is a singer. She's a singer, songwriter, guitar player. She's in music school. And she has went from having no voice, right and making no sound to 15 years old. She was one of the youngest contestants ever on American Idol. Yes. And amazingly, went on the show in a new genre they had which is called singer songwriter. And she went on singing a song that the producers had contacted her about, she wrote a song in 2015. And I'm a single mom, her dad lives in Japan, and he hasn't been in her life. And so I really raised this kid on my own and, and unfortunately, or fortunately, she kind of grew up alongside me. And so there were many times I was working in the

warehouse, you know, on the weekends, or I have to go into work for shelter bucks, and so on. I'm on a conference call with my team, you know, in the UK, and so she was getting up at the age of 5678, learning about what's happening in the world, whether it's in Syria or Sudan, you know, or in Haiti. And so she's always been peripherally exposed to the kind of work that I do. But she's had a profound passion and love for music. So, at the age of 15, I was bringing her to a conference I was speaking at because I didn't have a babysitter. And we were waiting in the terminal and I gave her the newspaper to read. And she read an article about the women in Alabama who were facing a near total ban on abortion, and, you know, an assault on their constitutional right to choose. And it was on the plane, I was doing some work. She opened her iPhone, and then in the notes section of the phone, she wrote a song. And it was called my body my choice. And it's not up to the boys. And we got to the hotel, she's put lyrics and music together and she played me the song and from the first moment I heard the song I was like, wow, this is profound, right? This is like it's beautiful. And it was really serving as a voice to these women. And she started performing it when we got home. She reached out to Planned Parenthood and started performing it locally at their benefit and performed it at the Granada. And lo and behold, the producers of American Idol reached out to her and said, Would you audition? Would you come on the show? And she auditioned with the show with the song? You don't see the song. You see her on American Idol, but not that song. It was a Disney own network and ABC and they wouldn't. So I'm sure it's far too polarizing. But she didn't sing it for Katy Perry and Lionel Richie. And Luke Bryan, and she got the ticket to Hollywood with this. Yeah.

Kim Fauskee 35:35

And where's it letter so far? Well, she

Kerry Murray 35:37

really is, is a prolific writer. And she writes things that are deep and meaningful to her. And you know, whether it's you know, a friend that struggled with addiction or abuse or or whether it's abortion rights. So really where it's led her is she is a singer songwriter major at a school called Interlochen in Michigan. And she's in the midst of college decisions right now. And she is definitely, I would say, leveraging her music and that kind of uniqueness about her within the college application process. So she has some interesting choices. I can, you know, shoot her to loves her music and math, those are, so I'm not sure what direction she's gonna go into. But I do know that she has too many guitars to count. She loves music, and it's a huge part of her life. So I envision that, you know, that will be something that will always be in her expressing herself through her music. And she hasn't had the easiest life, either, you know. And so I think the way she kind of deals with a lot of feelings of loss or pain or fear that she has, is also through her music.

Dr. Dana 36:47

So she doesn't live here in Santa isn't

Kerry Murray 36:49

right now. Because of COVID. She ended up getting a scholarship to a music school in Michigan, which is extraordinary. I mean, it was like a bubble during COVID. They went to school every day, I'll be at with masks, but she's on a 2000 acres on campus up in northern Michigan making music

Dr. Dana 37:10

amazing. Does she know that she was initially you were told that she might not ever speak

Kerry Murray 37:18

the show. And she's had a couple of scares along the way, even living here in Santa Barbara, there was a moment where she lost her voice when she was 12 years old. And so she had lost it for about a month. So it's something that is always in her and something that she's aware of. But also, it's kind of scary, you know that any moment, you know, she might lose it again. And so what would cause her to lose her voice? I think it was just trauma that she had at the time from singing and overuse of the vocal cords. And yeah.

Kim Fauskee 37:53

story. Yeah, you talk a little bit about her not having the easiest upbringing. Do you think that the grit and resilience has given her a greater perspective at her age now?

Kerry Murray 38:04

I think so. I mean, she's had a lot of real life experiences. And I think that she's definitely had a lot of mentorship and her music and a lot of power is with some of the successes that she's had, which has helped build her up. But she's like every girl today, and you know, that really suffers silently right from self esteem issues, right. And so she's been a huge part of a group locally called Girls Rock. And it's a board. It's an organization I served on the board for for years, but only because she became so interested in it back in, in 2012, when she first started, and if you don't know about Girls Rock, you need to know about it. So they use music as a vehicle to build self esteem and girls and put girls in bands. And what's interesting is that you really use music to help girls deal with some of the issues they're facing. And the statistics are awful that, you know, 70 plus percent of girls don't feel good enough. And they struggle with so many different issues, including Sophia, right? And she would say, Mom, 100% of us don't feel good enough. So I think that music has really given and helped her instill a self sense of confidence in her and also a safe place where she can express her feelings and emotions. But you know, it's been a difficult couple years for kids generally with COVID. So I'm happy that she's had an outlet to be amongst her peers and to continue to make music but yeah, but it hasn't been easy for these kids.

Dr. Dana 39:44

She traveled with you to any of the countries that you've gone to. With Shelterbox

Kerry Murray 39:49

No, she hasn't. She hasn't traveled with me like an active war zone or to a disaster zone but she's definitely traveled with me around the nation and I've taken her outside of the country as well, but really just for meetings, conferences, and so yes, a lot of rotary events. So Shelterbox is the official project partner of Rotary in emergencies. So there's a lot and it's an amazing global service organization. And so she's traveled with me a lot for rotary.

Dr. Dana 40:21

So she knows what her mom does. Oh, yes.

Kim Fauskee 40:27

So I think this statistic says that less than 15% of global organizations are run by women. If you were challenges if you had being a woman running a global organization, if any?

Kerry Murray 40:48

Well, I would say, I've had issues across my career from not just running an organization, but I think, and I'm not unique, I think many women would probably join me in saying that they've really struggled. I think me twos brought a lot to the forefront. But I think we suffered silently, so many of us, I think that it's often caused me to really dig deep. I've had bad moments, more than moments, I've had bad weeks, probably months, or even years at places. And, you know, I think women generally exist in a world that's often like, clip their wings, right. And for those people, me included, who at times have spoken up, it's also caused a great deal of trauma in being people who, who speak up and stand out. And that includes me. And it hasn't been easy. But, you know, I think that we exist in a world where women need to, to really get together and support each other, we just came off of International Women's Day, I do an event every single year, for International Women's Day, we prioritize the most vulnerable in our work, which are often women, but I often prioritize women in our work in the work that we do. And I know that when there are women in management, there are more women promoted across an organization. And so I believe in having a very rich and diverse workforce, that includes women, right at all levels of management, including senior management. My daughter, I mentioned as a musician, I mean, she wants to be a music producer, she talks a lot about producing music, and the fact is in her world, of all the music producers only 2% are female. Right? So she's also I mean, in every industry, you know, and it's in corporate business, it's in nonprofits, you know, it's in, in all in every field, we confront this. So, you know, I've kind of tackle things head on in my career, it hasn't always been easy. I've come across a lot, a lot of issues along the way. But I keep fighting, because someone has to, right, to speak out, speak up, and an advocate for change.

Kim Fauskee 43:22

What are some of the attributes that you think helped you become so successful in not only Big Pharma, but now with Shelterbox. And in the nonprofit arena,

Kerry Murray 43:35

I would say, the same similar attribute, I'll be at probably not as much, but in the people that we serve, and the beneficiaries that I get behind every day, it's fortitude. And I think it definitely came from my family, my grandmother, just kind of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. And you know, when you're in hell, and you find yourself kind of wandering through there, you just keep going, you know, and so I think it's a fortitude and it's a drive and it's a resilience. And sometimes it's really, really difficult, right. But you know, what, I think that's probably one of the biggest in me is just an ability to keep going. And in the toughest of times, it's probably the work that I do that inspires me the most that enables me to when I'm in a tough moment, is that I really see the people that we serve and how hard their life is, and makes me want to work harder and it drives me in a direction to kind of do more, to stay positive, stay optimistic, stay healthy.

Kim Fauskee 44:42

What's your biggest fear?

Kerry Murray 44:51

I would say one of my biggest fears would be around my daughter and The young people that I mentor, not believing that they're enough. You know, my dream is that, you know, especially youth today really believe in themselves and keep achieving, and just keep going for it. But sometimes I feel like the biggest obstacle is our own mind. Right, and it's our self. And so I would say one of my biggest fears, personally, is just that I want people to believe in themselves,

Dr. Dana 45:30

Well, you have good reason to be concerned about that. I mean, my experience with people, regardless of their age, is that how you feel by yourself pretty much determines how your life turns out. And if you have a lot of questions about your own value, you're going to get in your own way, whether you realize it or not. I see a fair number of young people. And it is true that I think it's harder now to be young than ever before. Mostly because of technology. And the fact that, you know, you used to have to wonder if you were being left out. And now you don't have to wonder anymore, you just have to look at your phone, and you can tell whether you're being left out or not. And it's really devastating for a lot of young people to feel like they're not their peers first choice, or, you know, it starts at such a young age that people start to wonder what they bring to the table, usually late elementary school or early Junior High School, which seems so young to be worried about, you know, how you look and whether you're smart, and whether people like you and all but it's, it's a huge part.

Kerry Murray 46:31

And we didn't have to deal with these complexities of social media, right. And so I was born in everyone's extraordinary world, right?

Dr. Dana 46:38

I think the first phone I had in my house was made out of wood. Exactly.

Kerry Murray 46:43

It's hard. It's hard for these kids really, right? When everyone's lives are just pasted across the best aspects of their lives, right. So it's this feeling of, of being left out, right, and not being good enough. And

Dr. Dana 46:56

the cool thing is that your daughter has a role model of somebody who's willing to fight for herself and, and sounds like you're a very resilient person who doesn't give up easily.

Kerry Murray 47:06

I don't.

Dr. Dana 47:09

But that's really important to teach your kids.

Kim Fauskee 47:12

Were you always I mean, you talked about playing in a predominantly boys sport, right, and being the first female to play on the Red Sox. So I gather you were always like that, because I understand when you were saying you're fighting for the underdog in the job that you're doing. And that just makes you work harder. But it seemed like you've always had that kind of resilience. And, and I don't want to miss data by saying I'll show you. But it's kind of like I'll show you. I'll prove to you that I can get it done and do this.

Kerry Murray 47:44

Yeah, I feel like in many ways have kind of always been fighting for an opportunity, you know. And I remember the first game I went to where we were asked to join the boys baseball team. And the other team forfeited the game, because they wouldn't play against Ross Ross. Yeah.

Dr. Dana 48:04

That's terrible. Well, I remember when my daughter was 10, she said, I have to give a baseball daddy said, What are you talking about? She said, Well, they won't let me play on the boys team anymore. And the girls team is no fun. So now I can't play baseball ever again. I saw how sad that. And we couldn't convince them to let her stay on the boys team. Yeah, yeah. So that was the end of her baseball career.

Kim Fauskee 48:29

One of the premises that Dana and I worked from is intuition and faith in how to manage fear. You know, there's a lot of talk, and there's been books out there about overcoming fear. Yeah, sure, you can overcome fear in a temporary way, jump off that cliff, because all your friends told you to jump off it and close your eyes and you do it, but you're not going to climb back up there and do it again. Right. So not only in your own life, but actually running a company. How does your own intuition and your own faith, whether that's an organized religion, self or a belief in yourself or a belief in humanity? How does that play a role not only for you personally, but in guiding your organization forward?

Kerry Murray 49:15

Well, I mentioned feeling this innate desire to make a difference. And I really believe everyone has something to contribute. And I've tried to really work hard at building a team of people who all know that are collectively moving in a direction around where we're going, but they also can really, in a very tangible way, understand how their role, really prescriptively makes a difference. And whether it's big or small, it's having little wins every single day. And I say that, even to my daughter today texted her. It's even just the little, just the smallest wins, that you can feel a sense of accomplishment and So I've really tried to build an organization that's very intentional, very purposeful, that's very much rooted in service, and the families that we serve, and the ways that we can make an impact. And so I feel that there's a collective responsibility, and a commitment on every member of our staff and volunteer team, that every one of them, makes a contribution. It's the collective efforts of all of us together that are making this global humanitarian work possible. But in our work, we have the benefit of seeing it very directly, right. So we see a huge catastrophe in the world. And we're able to deploy response team members, we're able to send in 1000s of shelters. And we're able to do training with people that we serve, and ultimately, on the back end, also see how that's making a difference in their lives and

enabling their recovery. So we're very fortunate that in that way, in the work that we do that we get to see people kind of go from their worst day ever, to also getting back on their feet again, and enabling their self recovery, right? And then a lot of the work that we do is around how do we build better resilience for the neck? Next disaster? How do we build back better? How do we teach people skills, especially in these disaster prone areas, that can better enable them to maybe prevent them from losing their home next time, move to higher ground, and maybe enable them to better protect their families as well in the future in their communities? So do we do a lot of training in the work that we do to enable better resilience for the future?

Kim Fauskee 51:42

How often do you second guess yourself? Because you're a leader, right? And your decisions matter, not only not only to the company itself, but your matters to the people you're serving. So I am just kind of getting at, you know, how much does intuition lead you in the way that you lead?

Kerry Murray 52:02

I don't think I make decisions in a vacuum, I think we do a really good job. And I really try to engage and involve other people in the work that we do, the people that we serve. So, you know, I feel like, you know, we make the best decisions that we can. But sometimes our decisions are precluded by a variety of other factors. So, you know, I always say, the hardest decision that we have to make is to say, no, that we can't go into an area or we can't help more families. That's the worst into I second guessed those decisions, of course. But sometimes you're going into a community where you have the funding to bring emergency shelter to take 2000 families, right. But maybe there's an adjacent community of 5000 More, who desperately need help, and are begging for your support. And there are times when we have to say no, because maybe we don't have the charitable resources to be able to mobilize a full response. And so those are those are the I would say the tough decisions that we have to make is that who are we going to help and making sure that we're helping, the most vulnerable we're giving them are the right tools we're doing, we do a lot of monitoring and evaluation. So we do a lot of work on measuring the impact of what we do. So they're a learning organization that's always trying to get better, get more efficient, and be more effective. So I would say that the hard decisions are the ones where we have to say no, and where we might not be able to go in and help the people that we really desperately want to, for a variety of different reasons, depending on where we're working.

Kim Fauskee 53:43

What's the next evolution of Shelterbox look like or the next evolution of your leadership look like? Well, the

Kerry Murray 53:51

fastest growing piece of our work has been in reaction to violent conflict. So when we first got started, we were an organization that was deploying shelter boxes and extraordinary disaster situations, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, cyclones, hurricanes. And what we saw was that the fastest wave of displacement wasn't actually coming from people displaced by disasters. It's a big number. But the fastest growing were people who are forced to flee because of conflict situations, like in Syria, across the Lake Chad Basin of Africa, places like Bangladesh. And so we've really started to increase the scale and impact of our organization by focusing on both disaster as well as conflict situations. So

where we're headed is that we want to have greater scale and impact. We want to reach more people we're currently bringing shelter to depending on the year it could be 200,000 people a year 250,000 But the scale of what we're up against is so massive that we need to do more. And so we have a strategic plan that guides us that we've been building, and also reorganizing, or organizing our operations team to reach greater scale and impact in both of these situations. And, you know, what we find in many scenarios that we're going into many situations is that sometimes we're the only shelter actor that's working in that disaster. And so for these families, the work is really life saving. And so all of us have a drive to do more. How can we do more? And so it's raising awareness, it's mobilizing the revenue to do it, to building the teams and the volunteers to get behind the organization. So it's just little wins step by step baby steps. Yeah,

Dr. Dana 55:49

I know, this is not the nature of your organization. But I have a lot of experience with trauma. And my assumption is that in a place like Poland, what you're seeing are numb, numb people stepping off the trains and, and walking into a new place. Because when you experience trauma, we're usually not attached to how we feel. We're in survival mode. And so I wonder what happens after a certain period of time when people start to feel safe because they have shelter? Because usually what happens is, then the feelings associated with the trauma that you've experienced start to show up. Again, I know this is not a part of what you guys have to offer. But does anybody offer sort of psychological services to people?

Kerry Murray 56:32

There are definitely, especially local NGOs and some global NGOs that focus on psychological trauma. But you're right, right, is that just because that you've come and you know, even coming here to the US, people suffer, refugees suffer, it's very difficult to assimilate in their new surroundings. I've seen this a lot in my work, even at Girls Rock in that we have taken girls into our summer camps, Syrian refugee girls. And some of the refugees who come over here, they're often the worst cases of violence and trauma, right, they've experienced. And so for many of these girls, they've never left their families before they've never been apart. So it's been incredibly difficult for them. As the years go on days and years go on. So there are groups that do it or certainly not enough. And right now, so many organizations are focused just on the immediate needs that people have for water, shelter, access to medical care, but the psychological services that they're going to require are immense. I'm sure it's a way that you could be of service.

Dr. Dana 57:42

Maybe not me personally, but least

Kim Fauskee 57:45

we can push him by we can put you in bubble wrap.

Kerry Murray 57:47

Yeah, there you go. Also, you know, it's a deeply locally and culturally rooted, right, so. So it's complex.

Dr. Dana 57:55

And I'm wondering about the people that volunteer and also that work for you going to war zones and going to places where natural disasters have taken place. I mean, usually like when people go to help in a plane crash or whatever, they suffer as much post traumatic stress as the people that were on the airplane, sometimes even more. So when they see what it is that their fellow humans have either gone through and are living through it or dying from it. Do you ever have to worry about some of the people that have worked for your organization being traumatized by what they're seeing? Or Sure,

Kerry Murray 58:28

and we definitely have, like processes and how we help people when they come back? And a lot of talking? Yeah, about what you experienced, and referrals if needed. To talk further and kind of be able to, to manage through it. But yes, I mean, there are definitely things that haunt you, right, from this type of work. And so

Dr. Dana 58:53

far, you've been okay, in terms of what you've seen and experienced in the name of all the tragedy that you've gone to help with?

Kerry Murray 59:01

Yes, and I think it's, it's, I've seen some really extraordinarily difficult things. But I also think that that further just drives me to want to have greater impact and want to do more

Dr. Dana 59:15

when you are doing things directly to see a change right in front of your eyes, which is amazing. It's really wonderful.

Kerry Murray 59:23

Yeah, I mean, disasters have this funny way of really getting to the heart of what's really important and focusing you and focusing a team right around a common mission that we're trying to accomplish. So I feel the most connected to the team really, usually in times of crisis or really coming together.

Kim Fauskee 59:44

So we're coming to the end of this conversation. Interested in in what legacy you want to leave, not not only as a professional running an organization, but maybe even personally, what legacy would you like to leave

Kerry Murray 1:00:01

I think that I would.

Kim Fauskee 1:00:05

I know it's a tough question because a lot of us don't think about that.

Kerry Murray 1:00:08

Yeah, I, I would love to leave a legacy where I helped empower others, to believe in themselves and to make a difference. And others if there's a legacy I could leave or a domino effect, it would be

encouraging and inspiring others, particularly women and young girls that I've worked with, to really believe in themselves to keep achieving, to go after the little wins every day, and to make a difference in the lives of others.

Kim Fauskee 1:00:41

Great. And people that are listening right now, how did they get hold of the organization, we'll put the we'll put it in the show notes as well, but how best to get a hold of you and how best for somebody to be able to help you.

Kerry Murray 1:00:56

Well, we have so many ways to get involved in the shelter box, our website to Shelterbox, USA dot o RG. But whether it's people who aspire to become a shelter box response team member, which is I think, just a really extraordinary way. Those are boots on the ground people who help distribute the aid to people who are ambassadors, we have hundreds of ambassadors across the nation. To people who want to come here in Santa Barbara and help out in our office. There are so many ways to get involved. So great ways to follow our work is on our Shelterbox USA, website, Instagram, Facebook channels. But there's there's so many ways to contribute.

Kim Fauskee 1:01:39

Great, Carrie, thanks for being here. It was a great conversation. We appreciate it. Thank

Kerry Murray 1:01:42

you so much. Thank you Dana. Thank you.

Fear Me Out 1:01:45

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